United Nations S/PV.5482

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5482nd meeting

Thursday, 6 July 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President	Mr. De La Sablière	(France)
Members	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Christensen
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Mlynár
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

Security Council mission

Report of the Security Council mission on the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/434)

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06-41819 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President *(spoke in French)*: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of July, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to our colleague Her Excellency Mr Ellen Margrethe Løj, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, for her service as President of the Security Council for the month of June 2006. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing our deep appreciation to Ambassador Løj for the great diplomatic skill with which she conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Report of the Security Council mission on the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/434)

The President: I should like to inform the members of the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Belgium, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Finland, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Leterme (Belgium), Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Ms. Lehtonen (Finland) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President *(spoke in French)*: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/434, which contains the report of the Security Council mission on the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that took place from 6 to 12 June 2006.

I might now take the floor in my capacity as head of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

First, I should like once again to express my thanks and the thanks of our colleagues who participated in the mission to the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their welcome to the Security Council mission that visited Kinshasa from 6 to 12 June.

I have already reported in detail on our mission, so today I will address the essential points that I have communicated to the members of the Council, drawing also from the mission's report, which has since been published.

We came away from our meetings with the understanding that conditions have now been met to allow the holding of the elections that will mark the culmination of the transition period in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In organizational, technical and security terms, the legislative elections and the first round of presidential elections should be carried out in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with the announced timetable on 30 July.

Nevertheless, during our mission we informed our interlocutors of the concerns of the members of the Council about the deterioration of the political atmosphere, particularly as regards certain messages of division and exclusion being broadcast by the media. We stressed that such messages are dangerous and we recalled other situations in Africa in which such messages have had tragic consequences. The mission therefore made recommendations in that respect in its report, particularly in paragraph 51 regarding respect for the code of conduct, paragraph 52 regarding access to media, and paragraph 53 regarding the security of the electorate and candidates.

During our mission to Kinshasa, we emphasized the importance we attach to the campaign's being carried out as peacefully as possible. All should be able to speak freely and the press must be allowed to do its work. In that respect, it is regrettable that a correspondent of one international media company, Radio France Internationale, which is widely listened

to in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was not accredited and was expelled.

The elections will not be an end in themselves, as we stressed during our mission. We underlined the importance of the period to follow. We especially stressed the need for all political actors to adopt a non-exclusive approach. Much work will remain to be done following the elections. We note that the situation is far from stable and that militias continue to be active in the East.

In that respect, our report contains recommendations relating to two issues of special importance. Ongoing reform in the security sector is essential if we are to deal with the problem of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I refer to paragraphs 54 to 56 of our report in that regard. Moreover, improved governance is essential if the Congolese nation and State are finally to benefit from the country's wealth after many years of war and transition. That issue is addressed in paragraphs 57 and 58 of our report.

Those are the main elements that I wish to stress in opening this debate.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for July. I wish to assure you that my delegation is fully prepared to work closely with yours during the course of our work.

I also wish to thank our colleague, Ambassador Løj, and her delegation for their excellent work in June.

I welcome the opportunity to thank you, Sir, in your capacity as the head of the mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the excellent report that was issued following the visit and which you have just outlined for us. I simply wish to confirm that everything you have just said perfectly reflects the many discussions we held in Kinshasa on 11 and 12 June.

We sent two main messages to the political protagonists and civil society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I shall continue to use the full name "Democratic Republic of the Congo" in my statement because, if I were to use the terms "Congolese people" or "Congolese leadership", I would feel as if I were referring to my own country and nation. My brother from the Democratic Republic of the Congo will therefore understand why I shall use the full name of his country to make that distinction.

Our first message was one of thanks to all our interlocutors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We told them that it is high time that democratic, free, transparent and credible elections were organized there in an atmosphere of peace and rejecting hateful and divisive language. We, too, expressed our concerns with regard to the tone adopted by the media and made it clear that the Democratic Republic of the Congo must find a way to ease tensions before proceeding to elections. With the launching of the campaign on 29 June, we note that calm is prevailing for the moment, and hope that it will continue to do so up to the elections and beyond.

The second message was that the international community has been and continues to be ready to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo during this process without any interference, as we believe that the future leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should emerge exclusively from the ballot box.

We also explained that, while the elections certainly represent a crucial step, a great deal remains to be done. The elections are unlikely to resolve all the problems. There is still a long road to travel before peace and stability are fully restored and the foundations have been laid for sustainable development. We must therefore bear in mind the need to preserve the potential for ongoing cooperation with the international community, which must remain engaged, and with the United Nations in particular, which must on this occasion ensure the successful fruition of its partnership with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My Congolese sensibility leads me to stress that point.

Six days ago, the Democratic Republic of the Congo celebrated the forty-sixth anniversary of its independence. It was precisely at the time that independence was declared that the difficulties arose. The crisis in that country has thus lasted 46 years. We are all aware that the first United Nations intervention was not successful. Now, however, I feel that the moment has come for everyone — the international

community, and the United Nations in particular, as well as the political actors, leaders and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — to ensure a successful outcome this time around and to begin the process of rehabilitation.

The Security Council mission undertaken a few weeks ago to the Democratic Republic of the Congo was therefore very welcome to us. It was the ideal opportunity, on the eve of an important event, to clarify the rules of the game and to agree on the steps that must be taken in the future to ensure an end to the lengthy transitional process.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): Mr. President, I join in expressing the sentiments already voiced regarding your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Denmark. We also join in expressing our gratitude to you for having led the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for your remarks this morning.

The mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo was vital and timely. Not only was it a clear demonstration of the commitment of the Security Council to support and assist the country as it marches towards the first democratic elections in four decades, but it also provided an opportunity to learn first-hand the status of the preparations for the historic elections that are to take place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ambassador Ikouebe complemented an important aspect of what we wanted to say. Therefore, we will not cover those items; we will only highlight a number of issues.

First, we urge that the elections be held as planned and that all the registered voters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo go to the polls to exercise their democratic right to choose their leaders. We appeal to the people and to the leaders of the various political parties to accept the outcome of the elections and — once it is established that they were free and fair — to support that political process and its outcomes.

Secondly, it is our view that, having invested so heavily in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including by sending seven missions, the Security Council needs to remain engaged in the country during its post-election period to ensure that the political gains to be achieved are consolidated.

Thirdly, it is also our view that the Democratic Republic of the Congo should continue to benefit from the presence of the United Nations and its agencies in maintaining peace, security and stability by instituting reforms in all sectors that need them. Suffice it to say here that the challenges are enormous but not impossible to overcome.

Fourthly, within the region it is crucial to enhance our efforts to support the people and the elected Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as they adjust in the post-election and post-conflict phase so that they can find their rightful role as an important and strategic player in the region. To that end, we look forward to the holding of a second conference on the Great Lakes region at an early date to chart the way forward to regional integration and cooperation. In that regard, Tanzania reiterates its commitment to maintain and strengthen its policy of good-neighbourliness with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Lastly, we believe that the gains that the Democratic Republic of the Congo stands to secure can be sustained only if there is a concerted effort to alleviate the abject poverty of its people. We have heard too often that a rich endowment of natural resources can sometimes be a curse; the reverse is also possible and is achievable. With sufficient political will — especially on the part of the political leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — and with the assistance of the United Nations, the rest of the international community and the international financial institutions, the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be transformed into an economic giant of the region and, indeed, of Africa.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo now stands at a point where it must rise to meet the aspirations of all its people to peace, security and development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to carry out a pleasant duty — that of saying what a pleasure it is to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council during

the month of July. I should also like to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Denmark, and to congratulate her on a successful mandate as Council President last month.

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, for having kindly agreed to organize this public meeting to consider the report of the Security Council mission on the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/434). I also wish to sincerely thank the members of the Council mission, whom you led on their recent visit of 10 to 12 June.

Indeed, this year, particular emphasis has been placed on the implementation of the transition process begun by the 17 December 2002 Comprehensive and Inclusive Peace Agreement. The members of the Council mission were able to evaluate the status of that process, which is entering its final phase. They were eye witnesses to the deep desire of the Congolese people to go to the polls to freely and democratically choose, for the first time in four decades, men and women to preside over their destiny during the next legislative session. From their discussions with their many interlocutors, the members of the Council mission undoubtedly understood that an unequivocal consensus was emerging in favour of continuing and concluding the peace process as soon as possible.

This last phase is a decisive step in the peace process. The campaign for the general elections slated for 30 July has been officially under way for several days throughout the national territory.

Here, I should like to congratulate the Council members on the drafting of their excellent report, which I am sure will enable us to better chart the path still ahead of us and will lead us together towards the peace and development to which millions of Congolese women and men aspire. The members of the Council mission formulated a series of relevant recommendations; I agree with all of them. I hope that the Security Council, which will undoubtedly discuss the report, can follow it up in concrete terms.

In that connection, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, has reaffirmed his commitment to do everything possible to ensure the smooth conduct of the elections, which are a new rendezvous with history that my country cannot miss. For the President, these elections are crucial and sensitive. They are the right path towards normalization and the resolution of the eternal problem of governmental legitimacy in my country. The President believes that nothing else must delay the holding of the elections. He has always tirelessly urged the people to turn out to vote in massive numbers and has asked the political actors to accept the verdict of the ballot box out of respect for the Congolese people.

The President has also instructed me to express to the Security Council his appreciation for resolution 1693 (2006). Adopted on 30 June — the anniversary of the independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — the resolution sends a strong message to the Republic with a view to the smooth conduct and success of the electoral process.

I would like to share with the Council some concerns expressed by the Congolese people regarding the holding of the elections.

First, with respect to the organization of the elections, we would like here highly to commend the tremendous amount of work done by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Nonetheless, every effort must be made to ensure that no new political or technical constraints are allowed to prevent the IEC from holding the elections in accordance with the calendar.

Secondly, while reaffirming the importance of fair access to the media, let me also stress the importance of doing everything possible to ensure that messages of hate and exclusion are expunged from the electoral campaign. Indeed, sadly, certain radio broadcasts bear a striking similarity to those aired by Radio-Télévision libre des Milles Collines. We welcome the fact that the IEC and the High Media Authority are currently carrying out a publicity and awareness-raising campaign on the electoral process. We remain convinced that the campaign will fully meet expectations. Let me add that measures have been taken to enable the international media to cover the elections.

Thirdly, with respect to new rounds of negotiations and consultations, let me stress that the referendum, the Constitution, the electoral law and the upcoming elections all emanate from a comprehensive and inclusive agreement that itself was the outcome of several political dialogues and consultation processes. The Congolese people have clearly expressed their wish that an end be put to a seemingly interminable transition period through the establishment of new institutions and leaders of their choice. We must ensure

respect for that clearly expressed desire of the Congolese people and not jeopardize the gains made to date during the transition by engaging in fruitless political dialogue.

We in the Democratic Republic of the Congo believe in the value of dialogue. Along with negotiations and consultations, it is the very essence of democracy. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been engaged in an ongoing internal dialogue since well before the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, signed on 10 July 1999, which marked the beginning of active involvement on the part of the United Nations. That will certainly continue to be the case before, during and after the elections.

Fourthly, the security situation in the country in general and in the eastern part of the national territory remains a source of concern. We welcome the fact that the Security Council and the European Union have agreed - and I thank them for this - substantially to increase their presence in my country. That will help to set up mechanisms aimed at ensuring secure conditions for the people and for the elections. We must also ensure strict respect for the law and for public order, without prejudice to efforts to promote national reconciliation, restore the authority of the State and rebuild the country. Those efforts must continue during the electoral process.

Let me assure the Council that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will do everything in its power to ensure that the elections take place in a calm atmosphere. The support of the international community will be crucial and decisive. In that respect, the support of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), of the European Union and of bilateral partners is greatly appreciated. It is important that together we use all means at our disposal to ensure the success of the elections.

Not only must the elections take place successfully; we must meet, in a responsible manner, the expectations of the people following the elections. It should be clearly indicated — and the Council mission stressed this point — that the elections are not an end in themselves. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is requesting additional assistance in the area of the restructuring and reform of the army and the police as well with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

The support of the international community will also be necessary in terms of the promotion of policies aimed at national reconciliation as well as economic recovery and the reconstruction of the country. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, are invited to consider continuing their cooperation over the long term, because the peace and security that the Congolese people desire so wholeheartedly are prerequisites for the sustainable development of not only my country but also of the entire Great Lakes region.

Those are elements of a broader programme to be developed by the first Congolese Government of the Third Republic. That programme must include judicial assistance so as to put an end to rampant impunity and prosecute all those suspected of having committed violations of human rights or of international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to vulnerable segments of the population, especially women and children.

Before concluding, allow me to express to the Secretary-General and to his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo our gratitude for their tireless efforts to restore peace to my country. I would also like to thank the Security Council for its periodic dispatch of missions to my country. Indeed, we are pleased to note that each visit by a Security Council mission has led to tangible progress in the peace process.

Lastly, I cannot but mention the staff of MONUC, the United Nations system and the international and national staff, who are paying a heavy price — and sometimes making the ultimate sacrifice — to restore peace and dignity to my country.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Finland, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country Norway, member of the European Economic

Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President, let me first thank you for having led the recent Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for your briefing on the results of the mission. We share the assessment of the situation that you presented to the Council on 16 June.

We are indeed at a critical juncture in the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The holding of the first free elections in 45 years represents a milestone marking the end of the transition period. These elections must fulfil the earnest desire of the Congolese people to select their representatives, at different levels of the democratic institutions, in free, fair and transparent elections.

We fully support the electoral calendar set by the Independent Electoral Commission for the presidential and legislative elections. We urge all political forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage in the electoral campaign in a spirit of peace and reconciliation and to hold a responsible debate. We believe that, in order to create a favourable climate for the elections, all possible measures must be taken to ensure respect for freedom of expression, including through fair access to the media. At the same time, it is crucial that the media display a responsible attitude. The EU condemns all appeals to hatred and xenophobia. The negative messages of the pre-election campaign on the subject of *congolité* must not be repeated.

Successful elections require sufficient security. While it is first and foremost the responsibility of the large Congolese police force and the new integrated units of the army, supported by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), to provide security, the EU, upon a request by the United Nations and supported by the Congolese authorities, has decided to deploy an EU military operation in support of MONUC. The Security Council authorized that operation by resolution 1671 (2006) of 25 April, and the EU Council of Ministers officially took the decision to launch the operation on 12 June. In addition, the police assistance mission in Kinshasa (EUPOL KINSHASA) is being reinforced during the election period to help the Congolese police forces coordinate their activities. We will thus be in a position to make a significant contribution to creating a more secure environment for the elections. However, it remains the responsibility of the Congolese authorities to ensure the protection of all the candidates, preventing attempts at harassment or at restricting their mobility throughout the Republic.

Successful elections also require sufficient resources. The European Union and its member States have to date provided some €250 million — approximately $320 million — or nearly 80 per cent of the overall cost of the elections. We have full trust in MONUC's ability to support the Congolese authorities effectively in the organization of the elections. Furthermore, in order to verify the correct conduct of the elections and to create trust in the results of the elections, the European Union is deploying a large election observation mission. The mission will liaise closely with other international observer missions, in particular those from the African Union and the Southern African Development Community.

However, successful elections mark only the beginning of the long and arduous process of recovery in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nobody should be fooled into believing that the inauguration of a new President and the swearing-in of the members of parliament will be the end of this process. Equally, continued strong support by the international community will be necessary long after the elections.

In our view, the following elements are crucial for the long-term success of our common efforts to stabilize the Democratic Republic of the Congo. First, it is important that the election results be accepted by all political players. Conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are such that all those who wish to do so will be able to participate. The European Union therefore calls on all the political parties, even those which have chosen not to take part in the elections, to undertake to respect the verdict of the polls. The real test of the success of the democratic process will be the way in which the election results are handled and the way in which the majority deals with the minority. Everyone should look to the future in a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation, a future in which all political forces must participate in the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, security has to be effective in the whole territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Important progress has been achieved in the

field of security-sector reform, with the process of army integration under way. Since June 2005, the European Union has supported defence reform through its mission of assistance for security-sector reform which provides advice and assistance to the Congolese authorities. A key project in this framework addresses the chain of payments, aiming at ensuring that monthly pay reaches the soldiers. Furthermore, the European Union has helped in achieving important results in the formation of the Integrated Police Unit in Kinshasa, through, inter alia, its civilian police mission, EUPOL KINSHASA.

However, much still needs to be done, and therefore the European Union is currently drafting a strategy in order to support security-sector reform in the post-election period. The EU urges the Congolese authorities to pursue further army integration as a matter of urgency and to remedy the problems related to command, discipline and, in particular, impunity, as well as those concerning financial management and social support.

The related problem of illegal armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo needs to remain at the centre of attention after the elections. We welcome the increased attention the Security Council has recently paid to the regional dimensions of this problem. The EU stresses the crucial role neighbouring countries can play and underlines the need for strict enforcement of the arms embargo. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/310) on a strategy to deal with the problems of armed groups operating in the region. We encourage the Secretariat to continue its work in this field, including on the specific problem of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

We welcome the firm action taken by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to combat impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and hope also that there will soon be progress in apprehending the leaders of the LRA. We also commend MONUC's role in the disarmament of illegal armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUC has paid a heavy tribute in human lives. We expect that MONUC will continue to play its fundamental role for security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after the elections, long enough to ensure a proper security environment in the eastern provinces.

Thirdly, economic development is key to the long-term success of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The country is rich in natural resources which, if illegal exploitation is halted and if these resources are managed transparently, should provide ample income to bring about a degree of prosperity for the people.

Since the Pretoria and Sun City Agreements, the international community has been an indispensable partner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is important that the international community remain committed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo beyond the election period and that it be given the opportunity to do so. The European Union and its member States are among the main development partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2002, programmes under the Cotonou Agreement have been funded with some €750 million. For the next indicative programme, from 2008 to 2013, the European Commission will aim to build on the election process with, inter alia, support for poverty reduction, governance, judicial reform and security-sector reform. In this regard, the European Union expects the new President and Government to govern in the interests of all Congolese and to stand ready to engage with the international community in a fair and transparent dialogue on governance.

The year 2006 might well be the most significant year for the Democratic Republic of the Congo since independence. The successful holding of the elections will be the first, decisive step in the construction of a new, brighter future for the people. That in turn successful elections will also greatly contribute to peace and development in the whole region of the Great Lakes. Together, we have a responsibility to help the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo achieve this goal and to stand by them in support of the authorities emerging from the elections for a long time after the actual election period. The EU stands ready to remain a part of any future engagement by the international community in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to that end.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Cools (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. I would also like to thank your

predecessor, Ambassador Løj of Denmark. Finally, let me indicate that Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement just made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

Last Friday, the Democratic Republic of the Congo marked the forty-sixth anniversary of its independence and launched its electoral campaign. This campaign will culminate in elections, with the first round of the presidential elections and the legislative elections to be held on 30 July. Therefore, today's Council debate, following the recent mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is particularly timely.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having provided my delegation with this opportunity to share some thoughts on recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on what we feel may help guide the Council's future action.

First of all, I would like, on behalf of the Belgian Government, to express our appreciation for the work carried out by the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in recent years through the Security Council, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the humanitarian and development agencies. Belgium has provided unstinting support for United Nations efforts to meet the real challenges of restoring peace and stability and achieving reunification and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Belgian support in the form of logistics, equipment and training for the deployment of a Beninese battalion in Katanga is the most recent example of such assistance.

The electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo represents a major challenge, and we must ensure that it proceeds smoothly. We must demand that the leaders and the candidates adhere to a code of conduct setting the standards aimed at ensuring correct and respectful behaviour by all parties towards other candidates and the electorate.

The bold messages that you, Mr. President, conveyed during your visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo were very important in that respect. We must reject restrictions on the freedom of the press, promote equal access to the media, prohibit the intimidation of candidates and condemn hateful and xenophobic speech.

We welcome the establishment of a committee of eminent personalities. We are certain that that initiative and others will reduce tension and prevent the setbacks that might result from inappropriate actions.

Our message must be simple: those individuals who can demonstrate, in free and transparent elections, that they enjoy the full support of the Congolese people may legitimately take up their new responsibilities in a democracy-based Democratic Republic of the Congo. Let us not forget the essential role to be played in that democratic regime by the future parliament, where the representatives of the people will sit, and which will give full expression to the notion of inclusivity for which the Council appealed during its recent visit.

We cannot avoid the key issue of our future involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the elections. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on MONUC (S/2006/390) contains a number of valuable preliminary comments in that respect. Belgium believes that the issue of maintaining troops within the framework of MONUC must be carefully and fully examined. In our opinion, the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be able to draw on MONUC support for as long as is necessary to help it to restore State authority for the long term over all of its national territory, in particular in the east of the country. That is in the interests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region and Africa as a whole.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly points out that the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains worrying and that significant efforts are required in that respect. It also highlights the need to begin reflection on peacebuilding mechanisms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome those proposals. Belgium will do everything in its power to contribute to the debate on such proposals, as well as to their implementation, in full cooperation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its partners.

The messages that the Council conveyed at Kinshasa, in particular with regard to the need to improve governance and turn the page on a tumultuous past in that respect, demonstrate its political resolve to make progress. Belgium remains convinced that structural mechanisms geared towards improving the management of natural resources can provide a meaningful and lasting contribution in that respect.

The Secretary-General — and you, Mr. President, in your report — mentioned the efforts that must be made with regard to the reform of the security sector in general and the army in particular. Together with a number of other partners, in particular South Africa and Angola, as well as the European Union, Belgium is fully engaged in that sector. We have participated, in particular, in training and equipping nine integrated brigades of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, in spite of those efforts, there is a long road ahead. It is our duty to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo to establish a professional republican army, which it needs if it is to reassert its authority throughout its territory — an army at the service of its people. Let us not waste time drawing up plans that, for the most part, already exist. Let us undertake solid efforts. Let us invest in effective and sustainable reform of the army, the police and the justice sector. That is the essence of peacebuilding.

The President (*spoke in French*): In my capacity as head of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like once again to thank the Congolese authorities for the warm welcome that they gave us. I would also like to thank the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Bill Swing for the excellent work the United Nations is doing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would like to conclude by repeating the words of Ambassador Ileka of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who said that his country has a new rendezvous with history. The international community, in particular the Council, is mobilized and ready to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo to succeed.

I believe that I am expressing the view of all of the members of the Council in saying that we are determined to remain partners with the Congolese people after the elections in order to help them with the process of the recovery of the country.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.